

**Department of Planning and Development**

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck, Chair, UDP Committee  
Councilmember Richard Conlin  
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

**FROM:** Diane M. Sugimura

**DATE:** July 10, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Committee Briefing: DPD Monthly Update, July 12, 2006 Meeting

**Permit Activity – Volume and Value**

Permit activity continues to amaze and swamp the department! Intake and issuance of building permits through May (June figures are not yet available) are both above forecast. The value for projects taken in so far is \$1,237 billion. This value is 65% greater than forecast, and at mid-year is about the same as our three-quarter year value for 2005, which had been an all-time high.

**Permitting Performance Targets**

For the month of May, 79% of non-routed plans had initial plan review completed within 48 hours, almost at our goal of 80%. For routed plans, however, we were only able to meet our target of 6 weeks on 34% of the plans reviewed. Because of the pace of new projects, we are continuing to sink further and further behind. We do hit our target of 70% having completed their initial review in the ninth week of review. This is a decrease in performance from earlier in the year and reflects the high number of routed plan applications being received and the increased complexity of the proposed projects. Through May of 2005, we had received 674 routed plans. For the same period this year we have received 1,130 plans.

We published decisions on 89 MUP applications in May. Of those 76 or 85% were published within 120 days. This represents an improvement in performance over earlier months of this year. A continuing trend, and concern, is the continued increase in the number of MUP applications being received each month. In May we received 142 MUP applications compared to an average of 95.5 for the first four months of the year, and an average of 55-65 per month in the previous year. Through May we have received 524 MUP applications compared to 318 for the same period in 2005.



### **Applicant Services Center Activity**

The Applicant Services Center is our front line for permitting activity. In May, our walk-in service requests totaled 8,113, an average of 369 per day. Our highest day topped out at 446 customer requests in a day. On an average day, we see more than 75 for coaching assistance.

### **Code Compliance**

Condo Conversions Update: The unprecedented boom in conversion of rental apartments to condominiums continues. Thus far in 2006, we have received inspection applications for 1,162 units. If this pace continues, we expect to receive requests for well over 2,000 units by year end. Last year the total number of units that we inspected for conversion was 1,551. The chart below illustrates that conversions really took off in the middle of last year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2004</b>	32	30	53	16	22	46	123	61	0	31	13	3	430
<b>2005</b>	0	102	14	51	7	300	130	14	538	142	109	144	1551
<b>2006</b>	97	104	340	98	446	77							1162 y-t-d

This level of demand has diverted a significant portion of our senior inspector resources from work on violation cases, particularly unfit buildings and premises, and other complex enforcement issues.

Eating and Drinking Establishments: This is a challenging issue, balancing lively and vibrant neighborhoods with reasonable peace and quiet for residential neighbors. One restaurant or drinking establishment compared with another restaurant or drinking establishment can have very different impacts on surrounding neighbors, depending on how it is managed and how patrons behave. This is much more than a land use issue.

In recent weeks we have received numerous complaints about drinking establishments around the city, which are reported to be the source of ongoing disturbances to nearby residences. Patron behavior when awaiting entrance and when leaving the business, and noise from loud music and voices are commonly the major issues. In several instances some of the noise disturbances come from outdoor seating areas, which may not have been permitted, or may not be allowed. We are also seeing unintended consequences of the smoking ban ... groups of people are now congregating outside to smoke, continuing their discussions, sometimes within earshot of residences. Some of these businesses obtained permits for restaurant use, but they remain open late at night after kitchens close, functioning as drinking establishments, a different land use category.

In a number of commercial zones, drinking establishments are a use allowed outright, but in Neighborhood Commercial 1 and 2 zones, an administrative conditional use (ACU) permit is required so that adverse impacts can be anticipated and mitigated. As a part of the conditional use review process, DPD primarily examines noise and parking impacts as

specified in the adopted code. Drinking establishments are prohibited in Midrise and Highrise zones.

### **Planning**

Livable South Downtown: We are proceeding with the first phase of economic analysis and urban design work. We have also developed a preliminary scope for the EIS, which will be started this summer pending funding commitments from property owners.

Waterfront Plan: We appreciate Council's strong interest in this planning effort at the last COW briefing. Staff will work with Council staff on the Concept Plan approval. The Mayor will transmit a proposed resolution within the next two weeks. We understand that Council wants to review the Concept Plan in detail, but hope that they will allow the Public Realm Plan to proceed, so that we can inform key decisions on the viaduct project.

Industrial Lands Study: We appreciate Council's recent decision to allocate funding for this work. We are preparing a scope of work and will issue an RFQ as soon as possible. We have also engaged the Planning Commission in this work. We anticipate the study will take approximately 8-10 months.

NBDS: We appreciated working with Geri Beardsley on this legislation. We will all miss her great and practical analytical skills. In the next few weeks, we anticipate resolving the last few remaining issues: open space/green factor requirements, parking, and the mapping question.

ECA: Portions of the recently adopted regulations have been challenged. The challenge includes several issues – adequacy of the regulations relating to earthquake hazards, wetlands protection, and shoreline and riparian corridor buffers. The GMA Hearings Board will hear the petition on July 17. The Board must rule within 180 days, unless the parties agree to more time. The Board's decision could then be appealed to King County Superior Court.

Urban Sustainability Forum: In June, the Urban Sustainability Forum featured two inspiring speakers. First, an insightful presentation by Walter Hood, professor of Landscape Architecture at UC Berkley and principal of Hood Design in Oakland. He spoke a lot about making places for people ... not forcing them into activities, but creating places that are attractive to people, where they will create their own activities. In mid June, Tim Beatley spoke on "Green Urbanism ... Learning from European and North American Cities." Tim is the Teresa Heinz Professor of Sustainable Communities, University of Virginia School of Architecture. He presented many inspiring and creative ideas ... car-free and car-limited communities; carbon-neutral car loans; on-street parking prices geared toward type of vehicle (SUVs cost more than hybrids!); owners' manuals for living sustainably in green buildings; and ecological "welcome wagons" with a green map of neighborhoods, coupons for fluorescent bulbs, etc.

Rosemarie Ives, Mayor of Redmond, attended again. She was applauded for having ridden the bus from Redmond! She had also told me that she believes this speaker series is

making a difference in Redmond as well! And, I spoke with a young man who thanked me for the series and said he has come from Portland for almost every one of our presentations ... I was amazed. We should coordinate with Portland ... we could share costs.

Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America: In June, I attended the first meeting of the Commission's "Green Buildings: Opportunities and Challenges" advisory group, in Montreal. The CEC is an outgrowth of NAFTA, a result of concerns about environmental impacts that could result from the agreement. I met some of the top people in green building in the US and Canada. Mexico is at a whole different level, but with some very interested and committed people trying to grow the concept. They are planning their first green build conference this fall. Their challenges are huge, their housing needs immense. This advisory group plans to hold its spring 2007 meeting in Seattle.

Learning from Abroad ... Seoul Takes Down a Viaduct: In early June, Professor Mooyoung Han of Seoul National University presented a video that tells the story of Cheonggyecheon, a 5.6 kilometer viaduct in the core of downtown Seoul, Korea. The failing 1960's era double-decker viaduct, built on the poor soils of the Cheonggyecheon River which it covered, carried 180,000 car trips per day in 2003. Seoul Mayor Lee chose to remove the viaduct, reconnect the grid, and restore the river.

The video chronicles the history, construction and controversies around the project. For example, after merchants held demonstrations against the project, City officials held more than 4,000 meetings to address their concerns. The restored river walk opened in September 2005. It is sprinkled with lavish greenery, art, fountains, waterfalls and 22 ancient to modern bridges. It has become the central defining open space in downtown Seoul, and has attracted over 20 million visitors its first nine months of existence. The project took two years and three months to build, employed 700,000 people, and cost \$376 million. Downtown high temperatures have dropped several degrees due to the cooling from the water and vegetation. Copies of the 11-minute video are available.

### **Public Outreach ...Coming Weeks**

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| July 13 | Dravus Commercial Area Zoning Study<br>5:30 to 7:30, Interbay Covenant Church, 3233 15th Ave W.   |
| July 15 | Northgate public celebration ... Library, Park and Community Center<br>Noon to 4:00 pm, 5 <sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and approximately 105th |
| July 26 | UDP Committee public hearing related to light rail construction<br>2:00 pm, Council Chamber, City Hall                                    |

Sharpen Your Green Building Skills: Information only since these are all **sold out!**

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| July 7  | LEED for Homes                                      |
| July 14 | Residential Builders' Perspective on Green Building |
| July 21 | Zero Net Energy and Energy Efficiency Incentives    |
| July 28 | House as a System                                   |